

# Caregiver Connection

April 2010

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.  
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION



## Coming together at Camp to Belong

“

If I had the choice of spending a year in Hawaii or 45 seconds with my brother, I would choose my brother. ”

– Camp To Belong camper, 2009

Children who don't see their brothers or sisters very often, will have a chance to spend five days with them at Camp To Belong-Washington, August 16-21.

A collaboration of Children's Administration and Foster Family Connections, this camp reunites siblings separated due to foster care placements or out of home care. 100 camper spots are available for children ages 8-18. Camper applications are being taken through April 23, 2010.

Camp To Belong-Washington, is part of a national camp program to reunite separated siblings. Washington began by sending 14 children to camp in Idaho in 2006. In 2009, the interest for Washington's children to attend grew so large, that a Washington state-based camp was launched at Miracle Ranch on Horseshoe Lake in Port Orchard, where 75 children attended camp last year. Of those children, 60 percent were in foster care, 25 percent had been adopted and the others were living with birth parents, relatives, responsible persons or were in a guardianship.

Camp is supported financially by Children's Administration and through private donations raised by Foster Family Connections. There is no cost for a child to attend this camp. Some of the highlights kids talk about are: Birthday Party Night, Carnival Night, Rodeo Night, and the creation of "sibling pillows". Each camper helps make a special pillow with permanent messages from their brothers and sisters. The pillows are special treasures that go home with each child home as a reminder of this special time spent together. Children also spend time around the camp fire sharing stories. These stories are told straight from the heart about what it's like to be separated from their siblings and how much camp means to them.

Children have come to camp from Texas, California and Montana to reunite with brothers and sisters in Washington.

If you have children who would like to participate in this amazing camp opportunity, you can link to [www.camptobelongwa.org](http://www.camptobelongwa.org) to access an application. If you would like to volunteer for camp, applications can also be found there.

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## Oh brother (and sister), where art thou?

While not biological sisters, Deb Kennedy and April VanGesen are certainly sisters in spirit.

The two foster moms from Port Orchard are also sisters with a cause. Their passion is helping children stay connected with their siblings when they have been separated due to a placement in foster care or in some other out-of-home care.

Strong advocates for the rights of children to reunite with their brothers and sisters, they founded Foster Family Connections and now partner closely with Children's Administration to help put on Camp To Belong-Washington every summer.

In August, their intense volunteer work will pay off, as 100 kids come to Miracle Ranch in Port Orchard to participate in a nationally recognized camp program to strengthen what are the strongest and longest life connections – those between brothers and sisters.

What fires their spirit?

"It really is the satisfaction of hearing around a camp fire a 10-year-old camper who had been a challenge all week saying, 'if had the choice of spending a year in Hawaii or 45 seconds with my brother, I would choose my brother,'" April said. "All of this is making a difference."

And as many foster parents will testify, making a difference is a two-way street.

"I've been a person who has been changed by Camp To Belong," Deb said. "It has shown me how important it is for kids to have the opportunity to have a voice and to stay connected with their siblings."

Both started their journeys into foster care in the early years of the past decade. Deb was inspired by a couple in the church where her husband Dave is the pastor. The couple had fostered about 85 children who often came back to thank them. April's husband Jon, is in law enforcement and often had to remove kids from their homes as part of his job. She never thought much, she said, about where those kids went. One day, Jon called and asked if she wanted to take in a baby. She thought it was a good idea and that phone call became a life-changing conversation. They became foster parents.

Both April and Deb got more and more involved in the foster care system as recruiters, liaisons, serving on foster care improvement committees and eventually on the Camp To Belong committee. When it came time to expand Camp to Belong because there were so many more applicants than camper spots, they stepped up.

"It was a glove that fit perfectly for me," Deb said.

They both live the mission. Deb has eight children, including two sets of two siblings. April has four children, including a sibling group of two.

As much as they love what they do, they have the ultimate goal in mind.

"Some day there will be no Camp To Belong because all the brothers and sisters will be together," April said. "And that will be a very good day."

You can too.



April VanGesen (left) and Deb Kennedy (right)

## National sibling day April 10th

National Sibling Day is a day to appreciate and cherish your brothers and sisters. The National Sibling Day advocates remind us that siblings are truly a special blessing that we probably all too often take for granted. They are often our best friends and supporters through life.

Sibling relationships are among the longest lasting, most significant relationships we have. But many children in out of home care have at least one sibling who lives apart from them. During a stressful time in their lives, children in care may be separated from the very people they share history, memories, and traditions with that help them maintain a sense of connectedness to their families.

New Children's Administration policy is helping to ensure that siblings have contact with each other at least twice a month. Let's make sure these contacts happen and let's make a special effort this month to appreciate those sibling relationships – those of the children in your home, and also your own!



## C'mon down to the Mariners game and celebrate our caregivers

May is Foster Care Appreciation Month and we would like to recognize and honor all caregivers of children. Whether you are a foster or relative caregiver, or an adoptive parent, we want to invite you to a fun day at the ball park and the opportunity to be recognized for the generous and challenging tasks you have taken on in your care of children. Sunday, May 2nd is We Are Family Day at Safeco Field. We will have a gathering that day before the game, from 11:10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. in the Ellis Pavilion at the southwest corner of the stadium (look for the sign that says third base entrance). One child from each region will be selected to go out on the field before the game. (If you have a child who would love such an opportunity, contact Dinah Martin at 360 902-0740, [dinah.martin@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:dinah.martin@dshs.wa.gov).) One of those children will be selected by the Mariners to throw out the first pitch.



Everyone with a We Are Family ticket in hand will get a ball cap with the special We Are Family logo and the kids will get a Mariners poster. All the younger kids will get to run the bases. And does anyone want to meet the Moose? Oh yeah, there may be a player or two around to meet them as well.

Discounted tickets are available at [www.mariners.com/wearefamily](http://www.mariners.com/wearefamily).

It is going to be a great day! We want to take this opportunity to help all of you as caregivers, feel special and appreciated for the amazing work you do everyday.

PS: The Mariners are playing the Texas Rangers.



## What's all this about 2106?

There has been a lot of buzz about House Bill 2106, also known as "HB 2106," "Child Welfare Transformation Redesign," just plain "2106", or "Performance-based Contracting."

House Bill 2106 was passed in the 2009 legislative session. HB 2106 had two separate parts. The goal of both parts is to improve outcomes for children and families. The strategies for improving outcomes for children and families are different for each part.

### Parts of HB 2106:

The first part requires changes in how Children's Administration purchases services for children and families by January 2011. In the future a piece of the payment for services will be tied to the outcome of the child. This part of the bill does not change the role of the state social workers. They will still provide case management and make decisions about child safety, placement, and permanency planning. We will continue to use shared decision-making to improve how we serve children and support families.

The second part creates two demonstration sites to test whether contracting with private agencies to provide case management (i.e. child safety, placement, and permanency planning) improves outcomes for children and families. This part is scheduled for implementation in July 2012 and is required under the new law. These demonstration projects are being developed by the Child Welfare Transformation Design Committee.

As with any major transition, there will be growing pains as we move through the changes. Children's Administration will work to make a smooth transition for caregivers and will offer information and support. We are scheduling meetings with foster parents in each region to discuss HB 2106.

### More Information:

To learn more about HB 2106, you can go to these websites:

<http://www.joinhandsforchildren.org/>

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/partners/transformCW.asp>

We will also provide ongoing updates about 2106 in the Caregiver Connection.



## Girl Scouts foster a future

BUILDING GIRLS OF COURAGE, CONFIDENCE AND CHARACTER WHO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

Girl Scouts Fostering a Future is a unique Girl Scout program for girls living in foster and relative care. The girls attend troop meetings in their communities with girls who are also in foster and relative care. Through this peer experience, girls learn they are not alone and, as a group, they become part of the larger Girl Scout family, which also helps establish a feeling of belonging.

Girls in the Fostering a Future program participate in a full range of Girl Scout activities as they come together to bond as a troop and learn the Girl Scout values of being honest and fair, friendly and helpful, considerate and caring, courageous and strong. Through the troop experience, girls learn to work cooperatively with others, compromise, resolve conflicts, be a leader and take pride in the accomplishments of others.

Some of the activities current troops are working on include environmental stewardship, career exploration, preparing for college, sports, hiking and camping, caring for pets, skateboarding, snowboarding, fashion photography, community service and so much more. Because Girl Scouts is girl-led, the girls can decide what they want to do, and the program is structured in a way that will allow them to accomplish their goals.

If you know a girl who would like to participate in a Fostering a Future troop, please call (800) 541-9852.



Post Adoption **Support**

## Questions and answers

Your child may remain eligible for the Adoption Support Program past age 18 if the child is still a full time student working toward a high school diploma or GED.

### What must you do to continue your child's eligibility?

- Ninety (90) days before the child turns 18 request a letter from the child's school stating that the child is enrolled as a full time student and has an expected graduation date.
- Send the school letter to your adoption support program consultant

### What happens if you fail to notify the program?

Failure to provide the information may result in terminating the child's eligibility for the program. All benefits will stop on the date your child turns 18.

Please contact your Adoption Support Program Consultant (listed in this newsletter) for any questions you may have about this and other program matters.

## Regional Contacts

### Region 1 – Spokane

Jan Lammers 509-363-3383  
Pam Copeland 509-363-3379

### Region 2 – Yakima

Steve Bergland 509-454-6924

### Region 3 – Everett

Natalie Trigsted 425-339-1762  
Linda Richardson 425-339-3998

### Region 4 – Bellevue

Evie Shiveley 425-590-3072  
Jennette Norris 425-590-3069

### Region 5 – Tacoma

Cindy Anderson 253-983-6359  
Laura Davis 253-983-6281

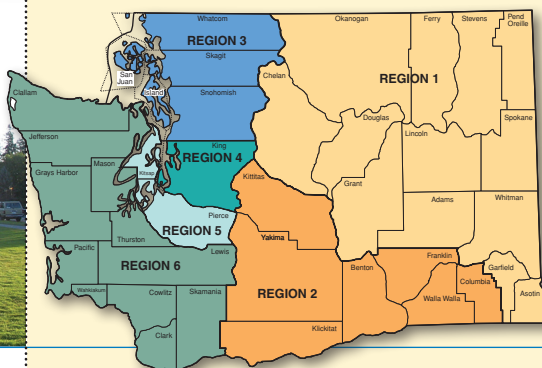
### Region 6 – Tumwater

Cheryl Barrett 360-725-6758  
Kim Mower 360-725-6778

### Region 6 – Tumwater

Lonnice Locke 360-902-7932

**Toll free number:** 1-800-562-5682  
(listen carefully to the recorded message)



# Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

## ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

**Family Help Line:** 1-800-932-HOPE or [www.parenttrust.org](http://www.parenttrust.org). The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

**Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect:** Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

**Mental Health Crisis Line Information:** The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

## GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or [www.fpaws.org](http://www.fpaws.org). FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

## RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

## CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve

<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.

# Have you signed up for the Listserv yet?

By now, you have all noticed that the Caregiver Connection is not arriving in your monthly remittance envelope the way it always has in the past. If you are reading this, good for you! It means you have found your way to the newsletter electronically.

Once again we want to encourage you to subscribe to the foster care listserv, if you have not already done so. Not only will that connect you to the Caregiver Connection every month, but it will put you in the loop to get immediate information of use to all caregivers throughout the month.

More and more, electronic access is a vital part of our communication path. Once again, here are links that will help you:

To join the listserv: <http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?A0=FOSTERPARENTS&X=42AF01545437600522&Y=madi300%40dshs.wa.gov>

To go directly to the Caregiver Connection: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/index.asp>

For questions, help with subscribing, or to continue to receive a copy by mail, contact Dinah Martin, 360-902-0740, [Dinah.martin@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:Dinah.martin@dshs.wa.gov).

## New autism data and information resource

New data released by the Centers for Disease control (CDC) states that Autism Spectrum disorders, which now include Asperger's Syndrome, currently affect approximately 1 in 110 children and is four to five times more likely in boys than girls. Research shows that early identification and intervention improves outcomes for most young children with Autism.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>

The Autism Outreach Project Lending Library at <http://www.nwesd.org/autism> has a wide selection of books, DVDs, and videos on early intervention available free of charge to residents of Washington State. New materials recently added to the library include:

- *The Spectrum: Children & Autism* (DVD) by First Signs, Inc.
- *Early Start Denver Model for Young children with Autism: Promoting Language, Learning and Engagement* (book) by Sally Rogers and Geraldine Dawson.

